

**PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS TO  
SUPPRESS FOUR TRIVIAL NAMES FOR BIRDS PUB-  
LISHED BY ANTON AUGUST HEINRICH LICHTENSTEIN  
IN 1793**

**Application submitted by the  
Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature of the  
International Ornithological Congress**

**(Commission's reference Z.N.(S.)526)**

Covering letter, with enclosure, dated 19th October, 1950, from Colonel R. Meinertzhagen, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature of the International Ornithological Congress.

As Chairman of the Standing Committee on Ornithological Nomenclature, I beg to forward to you the annexed application relating to four trivial names for birds published by A. Lichtenstein in 1793, for favour of decision by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature.

The Standing Committee is unanimous in its view as regards the first and second of the names dealt with in the present application. In the case of the third name (*Cuculus sulphuratus* Lichtenstein (A.), 1793), one member of the Standing Committee (Dr. John T. Zimmer) does not support the proposal submitted.

The problem dealt with in the present application has been discussed by Meise & Stresemann in a paper entitled "Notes on South African birds described in A. Lichtenstein's 'Catalogus,' 1793," published earlier this year in the *Ibis* (Meise & Stresemann, 1950, *Ibis* 92 : 22-26), extracts from which are quoted in the application now submitted.

I have to add that a slight amplification is necessary in the case of the third of the proposals now submitted to the International Commission by the Standing Committee. The object of that proposal is to provide a secure legal foundation for the trivial name *flava* Vieillot, 1817 (as published in the binominal combination *Campephaga flava*), and for this purpose the Standing Committee propose in the annexed application that the International Commission should use its plenary powers for the purpose of suppressing the earlier trivial name *sulphuratus* Lichtenstein, 1793 (as published in the binominal combination *Cuculus sulphuratus*). It must be noted however that, as shown by Meise and Stresemann in their paper published in the *Ibis* in 1950 (extracts from which are incorporated in the application now submitted), Lichtenstein was in doubt as to whether the bird which he was describing was a cuckoo or a shrike. In addition to giving this bird the name *Cuculus sulphuratus*, he therefore gave it also the name *Lanius flavescens*. The application now submitted by the

Standing Committee is therefore to be taken as constituting a request for the suppression, under the plenary powers, of the trivial name *flavescens* Lichtenstein, 1793, as well as of *sulphuratus* Lichtenstein, 1793.

The specific action which the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is now asked to take is thus that it should :—

- (1) use its plenary powers to suppress the under-mentioned trivial names for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy :—
  - (a) *cafra* Lichtenstein, 1793 (as published in the combination *Otis cafra*) ;
  - (b) *cafer* Lichtenstein, 1793 (as published in the combination *Cuculus cafer*) ;
  - (c) *sulphuratus* Lichtenstein, 1793 (as published in the combination *Cuculus sulphuratus*) ;
  - (d) *flavescens* Lichtenstein, 1793 (as published in the combination *Lanius flavescens*) ;
- (2) place the under-mentioned trivial names on the *Official List of Specific Trivial Names in Zoology* ;—
  - (a) *barrowi* Gray (J.E.), 1829 (as published in the combination *Otis barrowi*) ;
  - (b) *clamosus* Latham, 1801 (as published in the combination *Cuculus clamosus*) ;
  - (c) *flava* Vieillot, 1817 (as published in the combination *Campephaga flava*) ;
- (3) place the four trivial names specified in (1) above, as there proposed to be suppressed under the plenary powers, on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Trivial Names in Zoology*.

## ENCLOSURE

**Three trivial names published for birds by Lichtenstein (A.) in 1793 proposed to be suppressed under the plenary powers**

- (1) The trivial name comprised in the specific name *Otis cafra* Lichtenstein (A.), 1793, *Cat. Reh. nat. rarissim.* : 36.

It is recommended that the above name should be made a *nomen rejectum* and that the trivial name comprised in the name currently accepted for this species, namely, *Otis barrowi* Gray (J. E.), 1829, in Griffith's Cuvier's *Animal Kingdom* 8 Aves 3 : 304 ("Cape of Good Hope"), be made a *nomen conservandum*.

- (2) The trivial name comprised in the specific name *Cuculus cafer* Lichtenstein (A.), 1793, *Cat. Reh. nat. rarissim.* : 14.

It is recommended that the above name should be made a *nomen rejectum* and that the trivial name comprised in the name currently accepted for this species, namely *Cuculus clamosus* Latham, 1801, *Index Orn.*, Suppl. 1 : XXX ("Cape of Good Hope"), be made a *nomen conservandum*.

- (3) The trivial name comprised in the specific name *Cuculus sulphuratus* Lichtenstein (A.), 1793, *Cat. Reh. nat. rarissim.* : 15.

It is recommended that the above name should be made a *nomen rejectum* and that the trivial name comprised in the name currently accepted for this species, namely *Campephaga flava* Vieillot, 1817, *Nouv. Dict. Hist. nat.* 10 : 49 ("South Africa"), be made a *nomen conservandum*.

The circumstances of the present case have been discussed by Meise and Stresemann in a paper published in 1950 (*Ibis* 92 : 22-26), from which extracts have been made for the information of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature and are submitted in the Annex to the present application.

R. MEINERTZHAGEN : *Chairman of the Standing Committee.*

E. STRESEMANN : *Zoologisches Museum der Universität, Berlin.*

JOHN T. ZIMMER\* : *The American Museum of Natural History, New York.*  
(items 1 and 2 only).

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\*Note by Dr. John T. Zimmer on Case No. 3 (extract from a letter dated 3rd April, 1951) : The case on which I differed from other members of the Standing Committee may be covered by a single statement. I did not feel that any serious confusion would result from the adoption of the newly discovered name. The change is perhaps unfortunate, as all such changes are, but is likely to cause no more than temporary inconvenience.

## ANNEXE TO APPLICATION

Extract from a paper by Meise & Stresemann published in 1950  
("Ibis" 92 : 22-26)

During the last days of October 1793 a large collection of mounted birds . . . was dispersed by auction at Einbeck's sale house at Hamburg. The contents were made known to the public by a sale catalogue prepared by Dr. Anton August Heinrich Lichtenstein (1753-1816) . . . At the time of this sale, A. A. H. Lichtenstein was headmaster of a famous classical college at Hamburg . . . and his little pamphlet "Catalogus Rerum naturalium rarissimarum," containing the description of several new species, was commented upon in contemporary reviews.

It has long been supposed that many of the specimens listed in the "Catalogus" were collected in South Africa by Francois Levaillant during his stay from 1781-1784, yet Godman had to confess that he was quite at a loss regarding the former owner of this remarkable Cabinet. It is only now that the mystery of more than 150 years can be unveiled. All these valuable mammals, birds, shells, and insects had formed the Cabinet of L. F. Holthuizen, a wealthy Dutchman living at Amsterdam, whose collection had been praised by Levaillant ("Oiseaux d'Afrique, I," 1796, 4to, p. 56) in the following terms: "à Amsterdam, on voit encore le cabinet très-nombreux d'oiseaux, du citoyen Holthuyzen, qui possède aussi une grande et belle suite de papillons et d'insectes."

A remark of the younger Lichtenstein, contained in the biography of his father . . . where it is expressly stated that the latter catalogued the Holthuizen collection, led to the final solution of the riddle . . . It has been this accidental discovery that induced us to study the catalogue with critical eyes, whereby it soon became apparent that this had only very seldom been done by others.

Holthuizen seems to have bought his specimens from many sources; . . . A good many (47 species) came from Cayenne, but no other part of the world had contributed to it as much as South Africa: 60 species. It can hardly be doubted that most, if not all, of them had been collected there by Levaillant . . . Levaillant must have sold these birds to Holthuizen during the years 1785 to 1790—at the same time that another part of his collection went to Jacob Temminck and Joan Raye van Breukelerwaard, both equally of Amsterdam.

A. Lichtenstein had but very little practice in determining birds, yet the number of new species he dared to describe . . . amounted to 38, 17 of which are stated to have come from South Africa. They are the following:—

- . . . . .
5. *Otis cafra* nobis (p. 36), "Caffernland." Owing to the misinterpretation of A. Lichtenstein's original description (1793) by H. Lichtenstein in 1823, the name *Otis cafra* has been accepted to designate the large "Veld Paauw" of the Boers. However from examination of the 1793 "Catalogus" it becomes apparent that a small species of Bustard was meant, and that the description exactly fits the species named *Otis barrowi* by Gray (though most inappropriately, since John Barrow's "Wild

Peacock" was the large species hitherto called *Otis cafra*). Unless A. Lichtenstein's *Otis cafra* is voted an obligatory synonym of the later *Otis* . . . , our discovery is going to have deplorable consequences. . . .

8. *Cuculus cafer* nobis (p. 14), "terra Cafrirum." This name was forgotten up to 1870, when Sharpe ("Ibis," 1870:58) applied it to the species up to then incorrectly named *Coccyzus afer* (Leach). Sharpe apparently never gave the reasons for his change in nomenclature, which soon was adopted by all ornithologists, although the original description at a glance reveals the error. In reality Lichtenstein had before him a bird which was not crested and "corpore supra splendide atro, infra fusco undulato. Remiges et retrices splendide nigrae maculatis exalbidis . . . Kopf, Nacken und Rücken sind glänzend schwarz; Brust und Unterleib sind braun gewelkt. . . ." Such barred specimens of *Cuculus clamosus* occur in South Africa (Stark & Selater, "Birds South Africa," 3 (1903): 192). Therefore the synonymy will be:—

*Cuculus cafer* A. Lichtenstein

*Cuculus cafer* A. Lichtenstein, "Cat. Rer. nat." 1793:14

*Cuculus clamosus* Latham, "Ind. Orn." Suppl. 1 (1801):xxx

*Clamator levaillanti* (Swainson)

*Cuculus afer* Leach, "Zool. Misc." 1 (1814):72, tab. 31 nec *Cuculus*

*afer* Gmelin, "Syst. Nat." 1:418, 1788 (which is *Leptosomus discolor* (Hermann 1783))

*Coccyzus levaillanti* Swainson, "Zool. Ill." (2) 1:3, 1829, tab. 13

*Cuculus cafer* Sharpe 1870 et auct. seq., but not of A. Lichtenstein.

9. "? *Cuculus sulphuratus* nobis; vel potius *Lanius flavescens*?" (p. 15). "Hab. in terra Caffrorum." A. Lichtenstein had been in doubt whether this Cuckoo-shrike was really a cuckoo or rather a yellowish shrike. His description is clearly that of the female of *Campephaga flava* Vieillot. This implies the following change (unless the current name is ranked among the *nomina conservanda* by some international body).

*Campephaga sulphurata* (A. Lichtenstein)

*Cuculus sulphuratus* A. Lichtenstein 1793 ("terra Cafrorum," descr. ♀).

*Campephaga flava* Vieillot 1817 (South Africa, ex Levaillant, descr. ♀).

*Campephaga nigra* Vieillot 1817 (South Africa, ex Levaillant, descr. ♂).

. . . . .

### Suggestions

In accordance with their postulate that changes in current nomenclature ought to be avoided as far as possible, the authors suggest :—

1. Discarding altogether those names which had been misinterpreted for a century, instead of connecting them in future with their original, and therefore proper, species. If one applies this to the names *Otis cafra* (A. Lichtenstein) and *Cuculus cafer* (A. Lichtenstein), changes in the nomenclature of the genera *Eupodotis* and *Cuculus* will be prevented.

2. Ranking *Campephaga flava* Vieillot among the *nomina conservanda*, with *Cuculus sulphuratus* (A. Lichtenstein) an obligatory synonym of it.